UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

KELVIN STEWART :

Civil Action No.:

**COMPLAINT** 

Plaintiff,

AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC.,

v.

18 5219

Defendant.

Jury Trial of Tweleve (12) Jurors

**Demanded** 

#### **NATURE OF ACTION**

Plaintiff, Kelvin Stewart, an employee of American Airlines, brings this lawsuit against his
employer, American Airlines, to remedy discrimination based upon his HIV status and race
on the part of American Airlines. American Airlines subjected Plaintiff to disability
discrimination and a hostile and discriminatory work environment in violation of federal
law.

#### **PARTIES**

2. Plaintiff, Kelvin Stewart, is and individual residing at 1214 Holland Street Apt. C, Crum Lynne, PA 19022. At all times material hereto, Plaintiff was employed by Defendant, American Airlines, as a Fleet Service Agent. In his capacity of an employee of American Airlines, Plaintiff was a Fleet service agent based in Philadelphia and has worked as a Fleet service agent for American Airlines for around 4 years. Plaintiff is HIV positive and African American.

3. Defendant, American Airlines is a United States Airline headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas. American Airlines employs over 122,000 employees, and operates internationally with about 6,700 flights per day to about 350 destinations and approximately 50 different countries.

#### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 4. Jurisdiction over the matter is conferred upon the Court by 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 1332.
- 5. Venue lies in this district in that the events giving rise to this claim occurred in this jurisdiction.

#### STATEMENT OF FACTS

- 6. The above paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference.
- American Airlines, in a number of unlawful, intimidating and discriminatory acts, created a discriminatory and hostile work environment for Plaintiff based on his race and HIV status.
- 8. Plaintiff has been employed by American Airlines since 2014. In 2009, Plaintiff was diagnosed with HIV. Due to his diagnosis, Plaintiff was granted approved unpaid work absences under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- Upon information and belief, either American Airlines learned about the plaintiff's HIV
  diagnosis from medical paperwork provided to American Airlines in connection with
  plaintiff's request for FMLA leave.
- 10. On one occasion in or around the summer of 2017, the Plaintiff's manager Maggie Lieberati (Lieberati), made a racist comment about Plaintiff and other African Americans in front of other employees.

- 11. One once occasion, Plaintiff was in the break room with several other African American males when Maggie needed something done. Maggie, referring to the plaintiff and the other African American males, said to another employee "why don't you have one of these monkeys do it?"
- 12. Plaintiff, feeling intimidated and humiliated, reported the racial slur and discriminatory environment to Epic Points, a third-party equal opportunity company around Fall 2017.

  Nothing came of the report, and Lieberati continued to be Plaintiff's manager.
- 13. Lieberati had also made it known to the plaintiff that she was aware of his HIV status by intentionally embarrassing the plaintiff through discriminatory remarks about his condition.
- 14. For example, Lieberati made a comment in reference to the plaintiff's HIV status by telling Plaintiff, "you know your situation, be careful" while he was exiting a plane during one of his shifts at American Airlines.
- 15. On another occasion in or around April 2018, the plaintiff was suffering from complications from his HIV status during one of his shifts at American Airlines, which included extreme fatigue. The plaintiff made his manager Lieberati aware that he was not feeling well during his shift.
- 16. Lieberati did care that Plaintiff was feeling ill.
- 17. As the shift came to an end, Maggie demanded that the plaintiff unload the bags from another plane before he could leave. Maggie made a statement about how she did not care how the plaintiff felt, he had to do the task.
- 18. Plaintiff was unable to complete the physical task of removing bags from another flight because of the exhaustion caused by HIV and had to go home.

- 19. Approximately one week later, the plaintiff was brought in for a meeting and fired for insubordination due to his inability to complete the one single task before he left work, even though his manager was well aware of his HIV status and the symptoms he was having during the shift.
- 20. The firing of Plaintiff was pretextual for HIV discrimination.
- 21. In addition to and/or in the alternative, the termination of Plaintiff was due to his race.
- 22. Plaintiff has exhausted said remedies after filing with the EEOC and other state agencies and has obtained a right to sue. This action is filed within 90 days of the issuance of Plaintiff's right to sue letter from the EEOC.

#### **CAUSES OF ACTION**

# VIOLATION OF TITLE VII ON THE BASIS OF RACIAL AND DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

- 23. The above paragraphs are hereby incorporated herein by reference.
- 24. By committing the foregoing acts of discrimination against Plaintiff, Defendants have violated Title VII.
- 25. Said violations were done with malice and/or reckless indifference, and warrant the imposition of punitive damages.
- 26. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants violation of Title VII, Plaintiff has suffered the damages and losses set forth herein and has incurred attorney's fees and costs.
- 27. Plaintiff is now suffering and will continue to suffer irreparable injury and monetary damages as a result of Defendants discriminatory acts unless and until this Court grants the relief requested herein.

# COUNT II 42 U.S.C. § 1981 RACE BASED DISCRIMINATION

- 28. The above paragraphs are hereby incorporated herein by reference.
- 29. American Airlines evidenced a settled intent to discriminate against and wrongfully target Plaintiff on the basis of race.
- 30. Plaintiff's disciplinary actions and ultimate termination, were undertaken because of the color of his skin.
- 31. The aforesaid conduct of American Airlines was intentional and undertaken in reckless disregard for the federally protected civil rights of Plaintiff.
- 32. As a result of the said violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1981, Plaintiff has suffered racial discrimination, humiliation, embarrassment, and other harms, and are entitled to entry of judgment in his favor, and against Defendants, together with an award of declaratory and injunctive relief, damages, and ancillary relief as provided by 42 U.S.C. § 1988.

# COUNT III 42U.S.C. Sec. 1981 DISCRIMINATION IN THE MAKING AND ENFORCEMENT OF CONTRACTS BASED UPON RACE

- 33. The above paragraphs are hereby incorporated herein by reference.
- 34. Defendant evidenced a settled intent to discriminate against Plaintiff by interfering with Plaintiff's rights to the performance and enjoyment of the benefits of a contract of employment.
- 35. The aforesaid conduct of Defendant was intentional and undertaken in reckless disregard for the federally protected civil rights of Plaintiff.

36. As a result of the said violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1981, Plaintiff has suffered discrimination, humiliation, embarrassment, and other harms, and is entitled to entry of judgment in his favor, and against Defendant, together with an award of declaratory and injunctive relief, damages, and ancillary relief as provided by 42 U.S.C. § 1988.

#### COUNT IV ADA RETALIATION

- 37. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference.
- 38. In addition, and/or in the alternative, the foregoing adverse employment actions taken against Plaintiff constituted retaliation for Plaintiff's lawful requests and exercise of rights under the ADA.

#### COUNT V INTERFENCE WITH FMLA RIGHTS

- 39. The above paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference.
- 40. American Airlines was Plaintiff's "employer" as defined by the FMLA.
- 41. Plaintiff was an eligible employee under the FMLA
- 42. Defendants interfered with Plaintiff's rights protected under the Family Medical Leave Act, 29 U.S.C. § 2601, et seq.

#### COUNT VI RETALIATION IN VIOLATION OF FMLA

- 43. The above paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference.
- 44. American Airlines unlawfully retaliated against Plaintiff in violation of the FMLA.
- 45. American Airlines conduct constitutes unlawful retaliation against Plaintiff in violation of
- 46. American Airlines rights under the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. §2615(a).
- 47. American Airlines acted purposely and with malice with the intent to injure Plaintiff.

48. As a direct and proximate result of American Airlines' actions and unlawful retaliation against Plaintiff, Plaintiff has suffered mental and emotional damages, Plaintiff's employment was constructively terminated and Plaintiff has incurred, and will continue to incur, substantial economic damages.

## COUNT VII INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

- 49. The above paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference.
- 50. The actions of the Defendant, were designed to emotionally harm Plaintiff by causing him to subsist in an overwhelming, intimidating and hostile work environment.
- 51. The conduct of American Airlines was intentional, oppressive, malicious and/or in wanton disregard of the rights and feelings of Plaintiff and constitutes despicable conduct, and by reason thereof Plaintiff demands exemplary or punitive damages against American Airlines in an amount appropriate to punish American Airlines and to deter American Airlines and others from such conduct in the future.

## COUNT VIII VIOLATION OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS ACT (PHRA)

- 52. The foregoing paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference.
- 53. The above acts and practices of Defendant constitute unlawful discriminatory property use practices under the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act.
- 54. As a result of Defendant's discriminatory acts, Plaintiff has suffered and shall continue to suffer monetary damages and damages for mental suffering and humiliation unless and until the Court grants relief.

## COUNT IX HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT

55. The above paragraphs are incorporated herein by reference.

56. The foregoing actions of Defendant created a hostile work environment that was severe and pervasive and that altered the terms and conditions of Plaintiff's employment.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in favor of Plaintiff and against Delta, and Order the following relief:

- a. A declaratory judgment declaring that American Airlines has illegally discriminated against Plaintiff;
- b. Declaring the acts and practices complained of herein are in violation of the ADA 42
   U.S.C. Section 12101 et. seq.;
- c. Enjoining and permanently restraining the violations of the ADA pursuant to the ADA;
- d. Require American Airlines to pay all earnings Plaintiff would have received, but for the discriminatory practices, including but not limited to, front and back pay and otherwise lost and future benefits pursuant to the 29 U.S.C. Section 2617;
- e. Reinstatement of Plaintiff's employment;
- f. Payment of compensatory and punitive damages, to all Plaintiffs in an amount to be determined at trial; and,
- g. An award of Plaintiff's; attorneys' fees and costs of suit as provided by Section 505 of the ADA, 42 U.S.C. Section 12205 and 29 U.S.C. Section 26179(a)(3);
- h. Such other relief as this honorable Court deems just and proper.

BY: /s/ Brian R Mildenberg
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DATED: 12-3-18

Respectfully submitted,

BY: /s/ Matthew Weisberg
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DATED: 12-3-18 DATED: 12-3-18

# Sase 2:18-cv-05229-3CJ Document 1 Filed 12/04/18 Page 10 of 12 Significant Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and provided by local rules of court purpose of initiating the civil de	t This form, approved by the	e Judicial Conference of the	upplement the filing and service the United States in September 1	e of pleadings or other papers : 974, is required for the use of	as required by law, except as the Clerk of Court for the
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS	•		DEFENDANTS		
Kelvin Steward		_	Amrican Airlines In	CI CO	5219
(b) County of Residence of	of First Listed Plaintiff  XCFPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CAS	DELAYON	NOTE IN LAND CO	of First Listed Defendant  (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES O  NDEMNATION CASES, USE TO  OF LAND INVOLVED	- · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name. Schafkopf Law LLC, 11 E Weisberg Law, 7 S Mort Mildenberg Law, 1735 M	on Ave Morton PA 1910	PA 19004; 610-664-5 07; 610-690-0801	Attorneys (If Known)	<b>\</b>	
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in ()n	e Box Only)	I. CITIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff
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7 2 US Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship	o of Parties in [iem III)	Citizen of Another State	Incorporated and F	
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IV. NATURE OF SUIT					of Suit Code Descriptions
110 Insurance 120 Manne 130 Mailler Act 140 Negonable Instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise  REAL PROPERTY 1210 I and Condemnation 1220 Foreclosure 1240 Torts to Land 1245 Tort Product Liability 1290 All Other Real Property	□ 315 Airplane Product Lability □ 320 Assault, Libel & Slander □ 330 Federal Employers' Liability □ 340 Manne □ 345 Marine Product Liability □ 350 Motor Vehicle □ 355 Motor Vehicle □ product Liability □ 360 Other Personal Injury □ 362 Personal Injury → Medical Malpractice  CIVIL RIGHTS □ 440 Other Civil Rights □ 441 Voting □ 442 Employment □ 443 Housing/ Accommodations ■ 445 Amer w/Disabilities - Employment □ 446 Amer w/Disabilities - Other □ 448 Education	PERSONAL INJURY  365 Personal Injury - Product Liability  367 Health Care' Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability  368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability  PERSONAL PROPERTY  370 Other Fraud  371 Truth in Lending  380 Other Personal Property Damage  7 385 Property Damage  Product Liability  PRISONER PETITIONS  Habeas Corpus:  463 Alien Detainee  510 Motions to Vacate Sentence  530 General  535 Death Penalty  Other:  540 Mandamus & Other  550 Civil Rights  555 Prison Condition  560 Civil Detainee Conditions of	TABOR  ☐ 710 Far Labor Standards Act ☐ 720 Labor/Management Relations ☐ 740 Railway Labor Act ☐ 751 Family and Medical Leave Act ☐ 790 Other Labor Litigation ☐ 791 Employee Retirement Income Security Act  ☐ IMMIGRATION ☐ 462 Naturalization Application ☐ 465 Other Immigration Actions	3 422 Appeal 28 USC 158  □ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157  PROPERTY RIGHTS □ 820 Copyrights □ 830 Patent □ 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application □ 840 Trademark SOCIAL SECURITY □ 861 HIA (1395ff) □ 862 Black Lung (923) □ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) □ 864 SSID Title XVI □ 865 RSI (405(g))  FEDERAL TAX SUITS □ 870 Taxes (U S Plaintiff or Defendant) □ 871 IRS - Third Party 26 USC 7609	375 False Claims Act  376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a))  400 State Reapportionment  410 Antitrust  430 Banks and Banking  450 Commerce  460 Deportation  470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations  480 Consumer Credit  490 Cable/Sat TV  850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange  890 Other Statutory Actions  891 Agricultural Acts  893 Environmental Matters  895 Freedom of Information Act  896 Arbitration  899 Administrative Procedure Act Review or Appeal of Agency Decision  950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
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### ed 12/04/18 Page 11 of 12

5219 (to be used by counsel or pro se plaintiff to indicate the category of the case for the purpose of assignment to the appropriate calendar) 1214 Holland Street Apt C, Crum Lynne PA 19022 Address of Plaintiff: 4333 Amon Carter Blvd, Fort Worth TX 76155 Address of Defendant: American Airlines Philadelphia International Airport Place of Accident, Incident or Transaction: RELATED CASE, IF ANY: Date Terminated Case Number: \_\_\_ Civil cases are deemed related when Yes is answered to any of the following questions Is this case related to property included in an earlier numbered suit pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court?

Does this case involve the same issue of fact or grow out of the same transaction as a prior suit

	pending or within one year previously terminated action in this court?						<del></del>
3	Does this case involve the validity or infringement of a patent already in suit or any earlier numbered case pending or within one year previously terminated action of this court?						No 🗸
	rtify that, to my knowledge, the court except as noted above	essive habeas corpus, social security appeal dual?  he within case is is not related  Autrney-at-La	to any	case	now pending or within on	e year previo	No visible terminated action in 33362
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CIV	IL: (Place a v in one category o	nly)					
A.	Federal Question Cases:		В.	Div	ersity Jurisdiction Cases:		
	1 Indemnity Contract, Max 2. FELA 3 Jones Act-Personal Inju 4. Antitrust 5. Patent 6 Labor-Management Re 7 Civil Rights 8 Habeas Corpus 9 Securities Act(s) Cases 10 Social Security Review 11 All other Federal Quest (Please specify)	lations		1 2 3 4. 5 6 7 8. 9	Insurance Contract and C Airplane Personal Injury Assault, Defamation Marine Personal Injury Motor Vehicle Personal I Other Personal Injury (PI Products Liability Products Liability – Asbo All other Diversity Cases (Please specify)	Injury lease specify)	

ARBITRATION CERTIFICATION (The effect of this certification is to remove the case from eligibility)	ity for arbitration)
I, Gary Schafkopf , counsel of record or pro se plaintiff, do hereby certify	
Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 53 2, § 3(c) (2), that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the exceed the sum of \$150,000 00 exclusive of interest and costs  Relief other than monetary damages is sought.	DEC - 4 2018.
DATE 12/03/2018 Attorphy-ai-Law / Pro Se Plantiff	83362
NOTF A trial de novo will be a trial by jury only if there has been compliance with F R C P 38	

# IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

#### CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

Kelvin Stewart	:	CIVIL ACTION	
v.	: :	1 <b>8</b> 521	9
American Airlines	: :	NO.	
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SELECT ONE OF THE FO	LLOWING CASE MANAGEM	ENT TRACKS:	
(a) Habeas Corpus - Cases br	rought under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 thr	rough § 2255.	( )
(b) Social Security Cases re and Human Services deny	equesting review of a decision of tring plaintiff Social Security Bene	he Secretary of Health fits.	( )
(c) Arbitration - Cases requir	red to be designated for arbitration	under Local Civil Rule 53.2.	( )
(d) Asbestos – Cases involvir exposure to asbestos.	ng claims for personal injury or pr	operty damage from	( )
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(f) Standard Management – (	Cases that do not fall into any one	of the other tracks.	
12-3-18 Date	Gary Schafkopf, Esq Attorney-at-law	Plaintiff Attorney for	
_610-664-5200	888-283-1334	gary@schaflaw.com	
Telephone	FAX Number	E-Mail Address	

(Civ. 660) 10/02